

position of the input device 2, or a combination of information about pressure and position. In addition to being in communication with the input device 2, the controller 9 is in communication with the actuator 6 to produce a tactile sensation in the actuator 6 corresponding to the input or input signal received by the controller 9 from the input device 2.

[0020] The controller 9 is located in a suitable location according to the needs of the device in which the apparatus 1 is placed. In one embodiment, the controller 9 is attached to the PCB 4 as shown in **Figure 1**. Suitable controllers, include, for example, digital logical processors capable of processing input, execute algorithms, and generate output as necessary to create the desired tactile sensations in the input device in response to the inputs received from that input device. Such controllers may include a microprocessor, an Application Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC), and state machines. Such controllers include, or may be in communication with, media, for example computer readable media, which stores instructions that, when executed by the controller, cause the controller to perform the steps described herein as carried out, or assisted, by a controller. On embodiments of a suitable computer-readable medium includes an electronic, optical, magnetic, or other storage or transmission device capable of providing a processor, such as the processor in a web server, with computer-readable instructions. Other examples of suitable media include, but are not limited to, a floppy disk, CD-ROM, magnetic disk, memory chip, ROM, RAM, ASIC, configured processor, all optical media, all magnetic tape or other magnetic media, or any other medium from which a computer processor can read. Also, various other forms of computer-readable media may transmit or carry instructions to a computer, including a router, private or public network, or other transmission device or channel.

[0021] In one embodiment, the apparatus 1 includes a dedicated controller 9 for use specifically with the apparatus 1. This embodiment is particularly well suited for applications where the apparatus 1 is retro-fitted into an existing electrical or electronic device. In another embodiment, the controller 9 is the microprocessor or Central Processing Unit (CPU) of the electronic device in which the apparatus 1 is disposed. The apparatus 1 can also include additional circuitry such as the drive circuitry (not shown) necessary to create the tactile sensations in the actuator 6 in response to input from the controller 9 and a memory medium for storing data to be accessed by the controller 9 for example a correlation between the tactile sensations to be produced in the actuator 6 and the input information or input signal received from the input device 2.

[0022] **Figure 2** shows another embodiment of the present invention. An apparatus 60 shown in **Figure 2** includes multiple input devices. These multiple input devices include twelve fixed or pre-assigned alphanumeric input buttons 10a-l, three pre-assigned function buttons 11a-c, and three assignable function buttons 12a-c. The plurality of inputs devices are arranged according to the electronic device in which the apparatus 60 is situated. In the embodiment shown, the plurality of input devices are arranged as the keys in a key pad for a telephone or mobile telephone.

[0023] Embodiments of the present invention include an input device having a means for determining or sensing

pressure. The input device is capable of resolving multiple levels of pressure placed on the input device, and of transmitting a signal associated with the level of pressure placed on the input device. These multiple levels of pressure may be defined by, for example, the physical location of, or distance traveled by, a switch-type input device in the x-plane when pressed by a user (higher / lower), the magnitude of pressure placed on a touchpad-type input device, or other means.

[0024] The buttons of **Figure 2** are illustrative of such an embodiment. Each of the alphanumeric input buttons 10 shown in **Figure 2** is a keypad button. Each of the buttons 10 is capable of resolving multiple levels of pressure placed on the buttons 10. For example, the button 10i (corresponding to the number 9 on the keypad) is capable of resolving five levels of pressure placed on the button 10i. In the embodiment shown, the first level is a state in which no pressure is placed on the button by a user, the second level being a first magnitude of pressure placed on the button (greater than no pressure placed by the user), the third level being a second magnitude of pressure placed on the button (where the second magnitude of pressure is different from or greater than the first magnitude), the fourth level being a third magnitude of pressure placed on the button (where the third magnitude is different from or greater than the second magnitude), and the fifth level being a fourth magnitude of pressure placed on the button (where the fourth magnitude is different from or greater than the third).

[0025] In button 10i, each of levels two through five is associated with a distinct input signal. When the button 10i is in its first state, then the button 10i does not transmit an input signal. When pressure is applied to the button 10i by a user that exceeds the first magnitude of pressure, the button 10i transmits a first signal to the controller 9. When greater pressure is applied to the button 10i that exceeds the second magnitude of pressure, the button 10i transmits a second signal to the controller. When still greater pressure is applied to the button 10i that exceeds the third magnitude of pressure, the button 10i transmits a third signal to the controller. When even greater pressure is applied to the button 10i that exceeds the fourth magnitude of pressure, the button 10i transmits a fourth signal to the controller. The structural arrangement of the communication by the button 10i to the controller 6 of an input signal is further illustrated in **Fig. 4**, described below.

[0026] Each of the levels two through five of button 10i (and thus each of their associated signals) is associated with a letter, W-Z. The second level is associated with the letter W, the third level is associated with the letter X, and so on. The second level is associated with the letter W, the third level is associated with the letter X, and so on. In the embodiment shown, the key 10i has five positions corresponding to no pressure, and the letters W, X, Y, and Z. In an alternative embodiment, the key 10i has six positions corresponding to no pressure, the number "9," and the letters W, X, Y, and Z.

[0027] In the embodiment shown, the alphanumeric buttons 10 are all capable of resolving five levels of pressure. In alternative embodiments, the various buttons are capable of resolving differing levels of pressure. For example, in an alternative embodiment, while the button 10i is capable of resolving five levels of pressure, the button 10b (correspond-